Information Commissioner's Office

MONTHLY ROUNDUP

Volume II, Issue 8 SEPTEMBER 2019

WELCOME!

"PATI gives you a chance to maybe hear the critique or the concerns of the public through PATI requests, and to hear what they're asking about. And then it gives public bodies an opportunity to have a different relationship with the public, as a partner in governing, or as a partner in reaching those public decisions and hopefully reaching a better public decision."

~ Former Premier Alex Scott, *Public Access to Information: A Conversation with Alex Scott*

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) welcomes you to the September 2019 issue of our Monthly Roundup! The ICO is an independent, public office that promotes and oversees the use of the Public Access to Information (PATI) Act 2010 in Bermuda. Section 12(1) of the PATI Act gives Bermudians and residents of Bermuda the legal right to access records held by public authorities, unless the PATI Act allows a public authority to withhold access to that record.

International Right to Know Day is celebrated globally on 28 September of each year. On this day, Information Commissioners, the public, human rights advocates, the media, and public bodies celebrate the right to access information and the principles of openness, accountability, and transparency.

This year the ICO's theme for Right to Know Week was "**I Want to Know!**" We celebrated PATI requesters who have embraced the rights and benefits of the PATI Act. PATI requesters are individuals who use their PATI rights to assist them in being **informed**, **included**, and **involved** members of society!

Even with Hurricane Humberto impacting Bermuda, the ICO hosted the following Right to Know Week events and initiatives:

- Information Commissioner's Right to Know Day Declaration at City Hall
- ICO Information Booth with ICO Officers in Washington Mall
- Information Officer's Appreciation Reception
- International Right to Know Day "PopUps"
- Public Panel Discussion, "I Want To Know! Embracing the Benefits of the PATI Act"

CHECK THIS OUT!

Check out our Right to Know Day webpage **HERE!**

ICO Team with City of Hamilton Town Crier Mr. Ed Christopher, for the launch of Right to Know Week 2019 at City Hall.

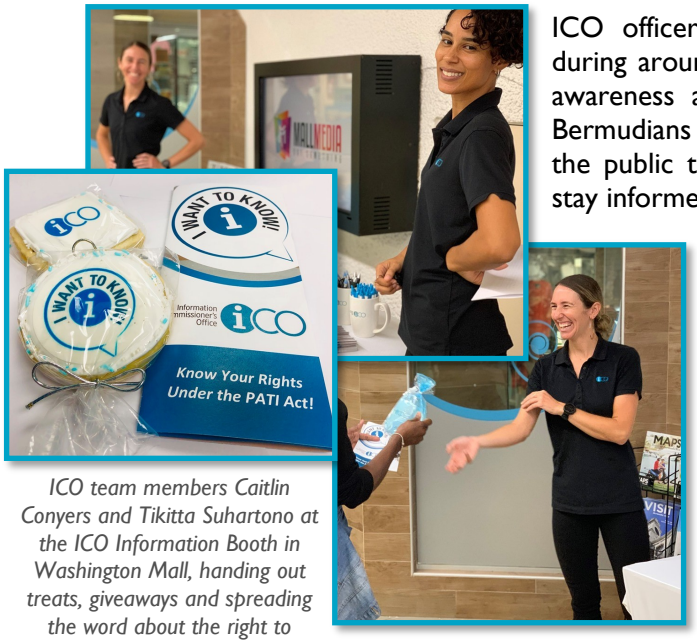
INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S RIGHT TO KNOW DAY DECLARATION

Right to Know Week was launched with the Commissioner delivering her Right to Know Day Declaration at City Hall in Hamilton. Her message called for the recognition and support of the right to access public information in Bermuda through the use of the PATI Act. Her Declaration reinforces that the right of information is instrumental to the realization of people's empowerment, and for promoting the equality of all groups in society. She further emphasized that the right to information is critical for informed decision-making for participation in democratic life, for monitoring public actions and for enhancing transparency and accountability.

A copy of the Declaration is available **HERE**!

Left: Town Crier Ed Christopher, Top: Information Commissioner Gitanjali Gutierrez, Bottom: ICO Team members at the Right to Know Day Declaration ceremony.

"I WANT TO KNOW!" ICO INFORMATION BOOTH & POP-UPS



ICO team members Caitlin Conyers and Tikitta Suhartono at the ICO Information Booth in Washington Mall, handing out treats, giveaways and spreading the word about the right to access public information.

ICO officers were out and about at several events during around the island Right to Know Week to raise awareness about the rights under the PATI Act for Bermudians and residents of Bermuda. We encouraged the public to understand and use their PATI rights to stay informed, included, and involved.

The ICO team handed out information on public access to information and free giveaways at the Washington Mall in the City of Hamilton. On Right to Know Day, ICO "PopUps" were held at five grocery stores across the island, taking awareness about the Right to Know into Bermuda's local neighbourhoods.

Our tabling and PopUps provided the public with an opportunity to talk to the ICO team. It gave interested persons a chance to ask about the benefits of the PATI Act and learn how to use their rights.

Information Commissioner's Office ICO

PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION: A CONVERSATION WITH ALEX SCOTT

Leading up to Right to Know Week, Commissioner Gutierrez sat down with former Premier Alex Scott to talk about his early vision for the PATI Act.

Information Commissioner Gitanjali Gutierrez and former Premier Mr. Alex Scott.

For Right to Know Week, the ICO released a 12-minute video of former Premier Scott and the Commissioner discussing the importance of public engagement, the rights under the PATI Act, good governance, and the critical role of the public in strengthening the PATI Act.

During the candid and insightful video former Premier Scott highlights the importance of the rights under the PATI Act for the empowerment of the people of Bermuda and his hopes for the law's future. Watch the full video **HERE**!

CHECK THIS OUT!

Check out our new know-your-rights brochure!
Feel free to stop by our office and get your copy.
More updates are coming soon, please stay tuned!

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2019 INAUGURAL INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S AWARD

Recipients of the 2019 Information Commissioner's Award
Left: Mrs. Debra Goins-Francis, Information Officer for the Bermuda Hospitals Board
Right: Mr. David Geraghty, Information Officer for the Bermuda Police Service, with Information Commissioner Gutierrez.

Information Officers have a critical responsibility in Bermuda's public access to information framework. Often, the Information Officer is the first and only person that a PATI requester interacts with at a public authority when making a PATI request. To recognise the contributions of Information Officers, the ICO has hosted an Information Officer Appreciation Reception every year during Right to Know Week.

This year, the Commissioner introduced the inaugural Information Commissioner's Award for outstanding service as an Information Officer in the areas of communication, innovation, leadership, and service. Nominations were invited from all public authorities. The Information Commissioner's Award provides an opportunity to recognise individuals for their hard work and dedication in support of public access to information.

The recipients of the awards were formally announced during the Information Officer's Appreciation Reception on Friday September 27th. Information Commissioner Gutierrez presented the 2019 awards to Ms. Debbie Goins-Francis, of the Bermuda Hospitals Board and Inspector David Geraghty of the Bermuda Police Service.

Information Officers in attendance at the Information Officer's Appreciation Reception, pictured with Head of Civil Service Dr. Derrick Binns and Information Commissioner Gutierrez. Dr. Binns was in attendance to congratulate award recipients and those receiving special recognition for their work as Information Officers.

The Information Commissioner also recognised additional Information Officers and others within public authorities who have been at the vanguard of implementing the PATI Act during its initial years (2014-2018) and who, from the perspective of the Information Commissioner, have provided service in a time that was distinct to the historical development of the PATI Act: Michael Soares (Information and Digital Technologies); Pamela Burrows and Denise Saunders (Ministry of Finance); Karla Lacey (Bermuda Tourism Authority); Sharmette Pond and Karen Dill (Customs); Deborah Levine (Bermuda Land Development Company Limited); Carlita O'Brien (Human Resources); Dr. Danette Ming (Immigration); Verlina Bishop (Department of Health); and Robin Skinner, Joshua Correria and Sarah D'alessio (Ministry of Health Headquarters).

The Information Commissioner's Office would like to thank all Information Officers who continue to represent themselves and their respective public authorities in a manner that further elevates the rights that the public has under the PATI Act.

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I WANT TO KNOW!

"I WANT TO KNOW!" PUBLIC PANEL DISCUSSION

Right to Know Week panelists which consisted of information officers and PATI requesters and was moderated by Information Commissioner Gutierrez.

The capstone event for Right to Know Week was our panel discussion for the public, entitled "*I Want to Know! Embracing the Benefits of the PATI Act*". Our discussion gave the public a chance to hear PATI requesters, Information Officers and the Information Commissioner candidly shared insights into their experiences with the PATI Act.

Varying perspectives on the benefits of using the PATI Act were explored, and the audience had the opportunity to dialogue directly with the panelists. One panelist commented that "There is power when using the PATI Act!" The discussion educated, encouraged and empowered members of the public to become PATI requesters. The panelists equipped the audience with helpful advice and tips to support anyone who wants to be informed and ultimately exercise their rights.

SAVE THE DATE

Information Commissioner's Quarterly Briefing
Wednesday, 4 December 2019
Topic: *Section 25—the four commercial information exemptions*

Wednesday, 11 March 2019
Topic: *TBD*

RSVP will be required. Registration details will be emailed to public authorities.

If you are an Information Officer or Head of a Public Authority and you are not receiving emails from our office on ICO-related updates, please email us at info@ico.bm to be added to our email list.

ICO Statistics as of 30 September 2019

(from 1 April 2015)

Total applications for independent review by the Information Commissioner ……..128	Closed: Decided ……..……...……45
Pending investigations ..……43	Closed: Resolved ……..……..14
Applications pending validation …… . 1	Closed: Abandoned ……..…… 7
	Closed: Invalid …… 18

Information Commissioner's Office

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